



Department of Justice

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KHAT DRUG TRAFFICKERS INDICTED IN INDIANAPOLIS

PRESS RELEASE

INDIANAPOLIS - Joseph H. Hogsett, United States Attorney, announced today that Hussein Ahmed, 32, Siyad Awale, 44, Handule Mohamed, 38, Abdikadar Hodan, 25, Mohamed Hersi, 50, Mohamed Warsamey, 34, Hassan Rafle, 30, Yusuf Mohamed, 27, Abdi Ahmed, 37, Hashim Ahmed, 27, Halima Omar, 49, Liban Abdirahman, 25, and Jama Mire, 25, were indicted for conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cathinone (a/k/a "khat") a Schedule I Narcotic Controlled Substance and possession with intent to distribute cathinone, following an investigation by the FBI and other federal, state and local partners.

The indictment alleges that the defendants conspired with individuals overseas to import cathinone, a stimulant found in the plant khat. Khat is a tall, flowering evergreen shrub cultivated and harvested throughout the Horn of Africa, including Kenya and Ethiopia. Khat is often wrapped in banana leaves to maintain moisture and potency, bundled and then flown to Europe. From Europe, khat is imported into the United States for further distribution. The Indianapolis based khat trafficking organization also included two participants in Columbus, Ohio (Awale and Omar).

United States Attorney Hogsett remarked, "This is one of a handful of khat drug trafficking cases across the country. It is an example of how this office, together with our law enforcement partners, will work diligently to ferret out drug dealing in whatever form it presents itself to ensure that we are keeping our streets safe."

FBI Special Agent in Charge Michael Welch stated, "The distribution of khat poses a danger to the community which has been diminished by the dismantlement of this network of suppliers."

According to Assistant U.S. Attorneys Matthias D. Onderak and Cynthia J. Ridgeway, who are prosecuting the case for the government, each charge carries a maximum of 20 years in

prison and a \$250,000.00 fine. Initial appearances were held before a U.S. Magistrate Judge in Indianapolis today.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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